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THE RIZDALES ARE TUNING UP FOR THEIR NINTH HONKY-TONKIN' CHRISTMAS AT THE RICHMOND TAVERN PAGE 12

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Seeking salvation from CARING LONDONERS

Salvation Army volunteer Kelly Thompson, 44, of London, sorts toys donated for its Christmas Hamper program on Wednesday at the Western Fair District. Hampers will be distributed to low-income families through Dec. 21, and Salvation Army officials are worried that supplies are running short already.
More coverage on page 3. ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

Kiss $1.4B goodbye

AG's annual report. Province writing off unpaid taxes because there are not enough tax collectors

Ontario's cash-strapped government plans to write off at least $1.4 billion in unpaid taxes because it failed to act promptly and lacked the manpower to collect them, auditor general Jim McCarter found in his annual report.

The province — which is facing a $14.4-billion deficit — is owed about $2.4 billion in taxes, mostly from businesses, the report found. But it isn't doing enough to collect them.

About three-quarters of Ontario's tax collectors were transferred to the federal tax agency after the Liberals brought in the harmonized sales tax in July 2010. But the move hindered the province's ability to collect billions in back taxes, with some collectors seeing their workload double or even triple.

Auditor General Jim McCarter
THE CANADIAN PRESS

It took collectors an average of seven months to even attempt to contact a taxpayer by phone, and in two-thirds of cases there was at least one six-month gap where no action was taken, the auditor found. Field visits weren't made, and liens and warrants for the seizure and sale of properties weren't enforced.

"Taking prompt action is vital to collecting debts," McCarter said in a release. "Research shows that the probability of collecting money that's owed drops dramatically as time passes."

There are only 62 provincial tax collectors and bankruptcy officers now, down from 264 before the transfer. The branch had some temporary workers to compensate for the loss until last March. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Room for improvement

Some highlights from the Ontario auditor general's 2012 annual report:

- The Drive Clean program does little to help reduce vehicle emissions.
- Waiting lists for long-term-care homes have tripled since 2005, and last year 15 per cent of patients on a list died before getting into a home.
- Up to 30 per cent of X-rays, ultrasounds and CT scans done at 800 private clinics are unnecessary.
- Overtime costs for Ontario Provincial Police jumped 60 per cent since 2004 to $53 million in 2011-12.
- Forty-three per cent of adult criminal charges are withdrawn or stayed in Ontario.

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NEWS

Family matters

Nan Bran missing? Nonsense, she says

Coun. Nancy Branscombe hasn't gone into hiding or bowed out of municipal politics.

Nancy Branscombe
CONTRIBUTED

She's simply out of town on a family matter, "nothing more complicated than that," she said in an email. A few people raised questions about Branscombe's whereabouts after she missed Tuesday's council meeting, which included a high-profile vote on a motion asking Mayor Joe Fontana to take a leave of absence. Branscombe, who has been vocal in her position that Fontana should step aside while fighting criminal charges, also missed a Dec. 4 committee meeting that saw the city's draft 2013 budget tabled. METRO

20 per cent

Grand offers family discounts in light of cancelled school trips

The Grand Theatre is offering a ticket discount for children and their families in light of school field trips that have been cancelled because of the dispute between the province and teachers' unions.

Any ticket order that includes a child ticket and is booked with promo code FAMILY will receive a 20 per cent discount. This includes all performances from Dec. 15 to 30. To receive this discount, quote promo code FAMILY when booking tickets online at grandtheatre.com. METRO

Lloyd (Butch) Stevenson, president of the Native Inter-Tribal Housing Co-operative, sits on the front steps of a co-op home at 37 Tecumseh Ave. W. Stevenson says he'll be forced to sell properties or increase rent when federal subsidies start expiring at his units in April. ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

Funds for affordable housing to expire

Subsidies. Advocates pushing feds for plan they say will help scores of London families

ANGELA MULLINS
angela.mullins@metronews.ca

Hundreds of low-income London families could lose their homes without action from the federal government, a housing-advocacy group says.

Subsidies paid to about a dozen local housing co-operatives (about 640 homes) will end in the next eight years, according to the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada.

Without the federal help, co-ops will suffer deep deficits and be forced to sell properties or raise rent, the federation says.

"Some people on fixed incomes, quite honestly, are having trouble with the (minimum) $300 a month we charge," said Native Inter-Tribal president Lloyd (Butch) Stevenson. "It means some families are going to be joining London's homeless list. Some will be moving in with families, some will be putting their names on the (city's) list for (affordable housing)."

Under government agreements signed decades ago, the co-op bases rent on tenants' incomes, bridging the gap between costs and revenue with federal dollars.

The first of those agreements expires in April. By October 2015, agreements — and the subsidies that come with them — will have expired for 30 of the co-operatives' 62 housing units, Stevenson said. All agreements will end by 2020.

Several members of Parliament addressed the issue this week in the House of Commons.

Responding to issues raised during question period, Human Resources Minister Diane Finley suggested provincial governments are best equipped to deal with the issue.

"We believe that they are best positioned to know how to support the efforts in affordable housing according to the needs in their area," said Finley, whose portfolio includes the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. "That may include rent subsidies for projects such as these."

At a glance

- The housing co-operatives for which government subsidies are about to expire were formed under a CMHC program that ran from 1979 to 1985.
- Agreements signed at the time required that co-operatives turn surpluses over to the government, making it next to impossible to save money and become self-sufficient, officials say.

Salvation Army. Toy donations for needy families are down big time: Spokesman

The Western Fair District's Special Events Building is looking a bit like Santa's workshop these days.

Volunteers dressed in festive hats and sweaters pluck toys and food off tables stretching nearly a football-field long as they fill bags for the Salvation Army's Christmas Hamper program.

But Perron Goodyear, the non-profit's spokesman, is worried: Toy donations for needy families are down big time.

"We are in desperate need of toys," he said on Wednesday, as the first hampers were handed out. "When I came down here this morning, it was quite alarming to see tables already empty."

The non-profit will distribute hampers on weekdays through Dec. 21, expecting to help more than 6,000 low-income families compared to last year's 5,800.

About 200 families received hampers within the first hour of distribution. Many of those receiving help, Goodyear said, are people who used to donate themselves.

If toy stocks run short, the Army will use money raised from its kettle campaign to make sure everyone who needs help gets a hamper. They're also asking people to consider making last-minute donations.

People in need of help can register at the Christmas Hamper giveaway. They'll need to show identification for everyone in the household, proof of income and proof of their address. ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

Drop-off

- **Where.** Toys can be donated at the Special Events Building from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekdays, left at drop-off points in local businesses or brought to the Salvation Army's Centre of Hope (281 Wellington St.) on weekends and evenings.

'That's reality'. Henderson defends divisive statement

As far as one London city councillor is concerned, there's no point in sugar-coating the fact there are political divisions on council.

At Tuesday night's council meeting, Coun. Dale Henderson said city business is really decided by just eight councillors, while the other seven consistently vote against them.

The comments came during discussion of the motion asking Mayor Joe Fontana to step aside while he battles fraud-related RCMP charges. The motion failed to pass by a margin of 8-5.

Henderson's statement touched off a firestorm with several other councillors vehemently disagreeing with his assertions. Less than 24 hours after the council blowup, Henderson refused to back down.

Dale Henderson
CONTRIBUTED

"We've got hardcore NDP socialists, we've got hardcore Liberals, and we've got hardcore Progressive Conservatives on council. There's only one that doesn't line up," he said. "So if you line up the Liberals and Conservatives, there's eight of us. That's how we think, that's how we vote." AM980/AM980.CA

Lightning are zoned in: 'It doesn't matter who we play'

Undefeated. London has won its first 10 games of the NBL Canada season

JOHN MATISZ
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Helping the food bank

Fans are being asked to bring a non-perishable food item to the Lightning's two home games this week. They play Thursday and Saturday at Budweiser Gardens. Both are 7 p.m. tip-offs.

London Lightning guard Morgan Lewis, left, takes a jump shot during a game of H-O-R-S-E with head coach Michael Ray Richardson prior to practice at YMCA Centre Branch on Wednesday. JOHN MATISZ/METRO

Tim Ellis pauses, cranks his neck to the sky, and then answers a standard question about 10 seconds after it has been asked.

Tim, what do you guys need to focus on when facing the Moncton Miracles?

"They do have a shooter, Darrell Wonge — can't leave him open," he said, finally. "Sylvania Watkins does some of the dirty work for them. And then Tyrone Levett — we know him from playing here last year — you have to keep an eye on him, too."

Ellis' hesitation doesn't spring from a lack of preparedness. Rather, the London Lightning simply don't give two hoots who their next opponent is.

"We're approaching every game like it's our last," London head coach Michael Ray Richardson said. "We need to play defence, rebound, pass the ball. If we do those three things, we won't have a problem.

"It doesn't matter who we play."

At 10-0, you can't blame the defending National Basketball League of Canada champs for these refreshingly honest comments. They've taken the eight-team pro circuit by storm, averaging more points per game than anybody else (115.8) while also allowing fewer points than anybody else (92.2).

The Lightning's roster is a who's who of potential all-stars, with eight players averaging 11 or more points per game. They're beefy in the all-around contributor department, and boast enviable depth and balance.

"Tim Ellis, he does a lot of things that don't show up on the stat sheet," Richardson said. "Rodney (Buford) has been huge coming off the bench. Adrian (Moss) has been huge coming off the bench. Elvin Mims has been unbelievable."

The only two London players on the NBL's points-per-game leaderboard are forwards Ellis (20th) and Jermaine Blackburn (19th). The former, an alumnus of Kansas State University, is No. 1 in another category, though: Field-goal percentage (55.8).

"I just try to take high-percentage shots," said Ellis, 31. "Most of my shots are lay-ups. For my career, I've always hovered around 50 per cent."

On Thursday, London will lock horns with the 8-6 Miracles for the first time this season. The start time at Budweiser Gardens is 7 p.m.

Mark Hominick retires from the UFC with a career record of 20-12. JOHN MATISZ/METRO

Hominick retires from Octagon

Mark (The Machine) Hominick has retired from the UFC, citing personal reasons.

"I think it's time for me to focus on the next phase in my career," the Thamesford native said. "I've set out and accomplished a lot of the goals I wanted to in this sport."

Hominick, 30, is married with a daughter, with another daughter on the way. The 24/7 lifestyle associated with training for UFC bouts doesn't blend well with building a young family, he says.

The decision, announced publicly Tuesday on the UFC Tonight TV show, was actually made moments after finishing his final fight. Following a loss to Pablo Garza at UFC 154 in Montreal on Nov. 17, Hominick knew his time was up.

"In the cage," he said, "I looked to my trainer and said, 'That's the last one.'"

Over the years, the five-foot-eight striker competed in the featherweight and lightweight divisions. His personal climax was fighting in front of more than 55,000 people at UFC 129 in Toronto in April 2011. Hominick lost the featherweight title fight against champion Jose Aldo, but the bout was named fight of the night.

Hominick, who co-owns the Adrenaline Training Center in East London, says he hopes to dabble more on the business side of mixed martial arts.

"There's no question for the rest of my life I'm going to be involved in MMA, hopefully with the UFC."

JOHN MATISZ/METRO

Quoted

"I think if he feels confident in the decision, then it's the right decision for him ... The guy has done so much in the sport. He has nothing left to prove, and I wish all the best for him."

Sam Stout, fellow UFC fighter and good friend of Hominick

Canadian Blood Services

Miracle awareness campaign kicks off

Canadian Blood Services is asking people to consider giving the gift of blood this holiday season. The agency has started a Miracle campaign, raising awareness about the number of blood transfusions that will be needed through Jan. 2. METRO

Health Unit

Third flu-related death this season

The Middlesex-London Health Unit has reported its third flu-related fatality.

The death occurred in the week of Dec. 4 to Monday, which also included 16 hospitalizations. There were 30 new laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza (29 influenza A and one influenza B) for the week.

Two new influenza A outbreaks were declared in long-term care homes, bringing the total of influenza outbreaks in facilities to four.

For more information, visit healthunit.com.

METRO

Digital marketing

LEDC ranked among world's top agencies

The London Economic Development Corp. was ranked among the world leaders in fDi Magazine's inaugural digital marketing awards.

In the category of best use of social media, the LEDC was ranked fourth internationally, as well as sixth for top city digital marketing. The London group finished 19th on the list of top websites.

A panel of judges ranked economic development agencies from across the world in eight categories. METRO

Hockey

3 Knights invited to Top Prospects Game

Forwards Max Domi and Bo Horvat along with defenceman Nikita Zadorov of the London Knights have been selected for the 2013 Home Hardware CHL/NHL Top Prospects Game. The trio will suit up for Team Orr on Jan. 16 in Halifax. METRO

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Dad who killed his children freed

A father who stabbed his children to death will be a free man, less than four years later.

Guy Turcotte has been granted his release, with conditions, from a psychiatric institution. The cardiologist had been found not criminally responsible for killing his two children and, since last year's court verdict, he had been in Montreal's Pinel institute.

His case provoked a torrent of outrage in Quebec, where Turcotte is a household name.

He had admitted to stabbing his young children 46 times but said he didn't remember doing it, hadn't wanted to do it and had been experiencing blackouts on the night of the killings.

He said he was distraught over the breakup of his marriage. His wife had left him for a family friend who was her personal trainer.

Turcotte's release was unanimously approved today by a three-member panel. He will have to get annual mental-health checkups, continue his therapy, stay out of trouble and avoid all contact with his ex-wife. But his legal woes are not over yet: the Crown has filed to appeal the 2011 court verdict.

The Tories plan to introduce a bill in the House of Commons early next year that would make the safety of the public the paramount factor for review boards that determine an offender's release.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Criminal code plans

Several cases like Turcotte's, including the 2008 bus-beheading in Manitoba and the Schoenborn child-killings in B.C., have prompted a federal policy change. The Harper government plans to make it more difficult for mentally ill offenders found not criminally responsible to be released from custody.

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Singer Justin Bieber at a Dec. 5 event in Philadelphia. A plot to murder and castrate the singer in November was thwarted by police. LISA LAKE/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Alleged plot to castrate, kill Bieber thwarted

Bitter admirer?

Suspected mastermind, who has a Bieber tattoo on his leg, already in prison for murder of 15-year-old

New Mexico police believe they have unearthed a plot to kill and castrate Justin Bieber.

An affidavit for an arrest from New Mexico State Police described a grisly plan that was to be carried out in late November in New York City. Bieber played Madison Square Gardens on Nov. 28 and 29.

The plan was hatched behind bars after inmate Dana Martin was transferred from a Florida prison to the Southern New Mexico Corrections Facility in April 2012, the affidavit said.

Martin allegedly recruited Mark Aaron Staake at the jail after the fellow inmate saw a tattoo of Bieber on his leg. The plan was to kill and castrate four people in two states, with Bieber as the main target.

The details were revealed on Nov. 20, when Martin asked to speak to police, telling them Staake and his nephew, Tanner Ruane, were on their way to Vermont to commit two murders.

Both men have been arrested. Staake was picked up by police in Vermont, while Ruane was arrested in New York state.

He described the method: strangulation with a neck tie, followed by castration with Durasharp-brand garden clippers. The bounty on each testicle was set at $2,500.

Martin is serving consecutive life sentences for murders committed in Vermont in 2000. In that case, police told The Associated Press the strangulation murder of a 15-year-old girl was a "case of jealousy."

Throughout the police interview, Martin revealed that there would be two more targets, including the main one, identified as J.B. in the affidavit, who "has a measure of fame."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Bieber plot

- **Manipulator.** The police affidavit describes Martin as "a very good manipulator," who convinced Staake that he had access to large sums of money and a multimillion-dollar home and property, where Staake and Ruane could hide out.
- **Connections.** He also told Staake that he had connections to Chinese gangs in New York, who had "sanctioned" the murders, according to the affidavit.

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Tories 'hit the reset button' — F-35 mess to be reviewed

Bombshell claim shocks MPs. Costs could soar to $45.8 billion over 42 years, long-awaited KPMG report warns

The Harper government has "hit the reset button" in the F-35 mess.

A bombshell report has exposed the cascading multibillion-dollar cost of the stealth aircraft.

The long-awaited KPMG report warns the Lockheed Martin-built F-35s could cost Canada as much as $45.8 billion over 42 years.

The report says National Defence neglected to build a large enough financial cushion into the plan to replace Canada's aging fighter fleet.

And the paltry-by-comparison $9 billion the department set aside likely won't be enough to cover the planned purchase of 65 jets.

That F-35 headache just won't go away. Defence Minister Peter MacKay takes part in a Parliament Hill news conference on the controversial fighter jets on Wednesday. FRED CHARTRAND/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Now the entire process will be reviewed, Public Works Minister Rona Ambrose said Wednesday.

"The next step is a full review of options," Ambrose told a news conference following the release of the report.

"We have hit the reset button and are taking the time to do a complete assessment of all available options."

Defence Minister Peter MacKay said the government will ensure "that balance is maintained between the military needs and taxpayer interests.

"Ultimately, our government will get the best plane for the armed forces, for our pilots and for Canadian taxpayers."

The NDP's opposition critics were unmoved, however, insisting the government was steadfastly refusing to admit the whole process has been fumbled.

"You can't move on, you can't move forward until you've admitted that you've got a problem and that you've made mistakes," said Matthew Kellway, the party's procurement critic.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Numbers game

65

The number of jets in the government's planned F-35 purchase. But the soaring costs may force a reduction to 55 planes.

Wire cash, please

Skype scam almost pays off

Police are warning people to be on guard against fraudsters using Skype.

Kingston police say a resident got a Skype video call from a man identifying himself as a doctor held prisoner in Syria.

The supposed doctor said if $2,500 was not transferred to a Western Union office in Lebanon, he would be beheaded. The victim wired funds — but later contacted police and stopped the transfer.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Software icon

McAfee booted from Guatemala

Anti-virus software founder John McAfee arrived in Miami Wednesday after being deported from Guatemala, and was expected to be escorted by federal authorities after he cleared customs.

He had sneaked into Guatemala from Belize, where authorities want to question him in a homicide.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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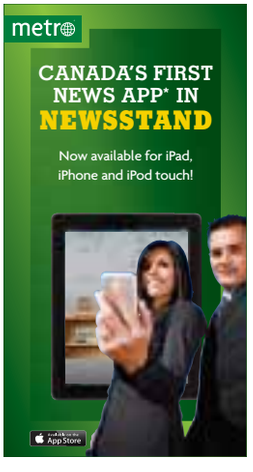

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U.S. fiscal cliff imperils energy, mining sectors

Canadian fallout. Failure to reach deal would hit some types of companies especially hard, observers say

A plunge by Washington over the so-called fiscal cliff would hit Canadian miners and energy companies particularly hard since a slowdown in the U.S. economy would also drag down prices for base metals and oil.

Paul Taylor, chief investment officer for fundamental equities at BMO Asset Management, said Wednesday it will be the cyclical sectors that will be most affected if U.S. lawmakers fail to reach a deal to avoid the automatic tax hikes and spending cuts set to kick in next year.

"We are very much dependent on energy and materials which represent, of course, nearly 50 per cent of the Canadian equity market by market cap," Taylor said.

"And with slower U.S. — and read from that slower global economic activity — you would have to expect that the price of base metals and energy on which we depend so heavily would be affected negatively and they would certainly lose a bit." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Consumer concern

- A new poll by Sun Life Financial suggests 63 per cent of Canadians are concerned our economy will be hurt if a deal to avert the fiscal cliff is not reached.
- "Along with high debt levels and a slowing real estate market in Canada, the fiscal cliff situation in the U.S. is giving Canadians another reason to worry about the Canadian economy," said Sadiq Adatia, chief investment officer of Sun Life Global Investments.

Turning the page on e-readers

A young girl looks at a Sony e-book at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October in Frankfurt, Germany. Sales of dedicated e-reading devices are in an "alarmingly precipitous decline" this year after five years of rapid growth, research firm IHS iSuppli says. Full-blown tablets with colour screens are behind the decline, the firm says. IHS expects shipments of e-readers to fall from 23.2 million last year to 14.1 million this year. The rapid rise and now rapid decline of e-readers is unusual even for the volatile consumer electronics industry, says IHS analyst Jordan Selburn, but it's indicative of the broader trend of single-purpose devices like e-readers and cameras losing out to general-purpose ones like tablets and smartphones. GETTY IMAGES FILE

Ignition issues

Honda recalls 870,000 vehicles

Honda is recalling about 870,000 minivans and SUVs worldwide because they can roll away even though drivers have removed the keys from the ignition.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market Minute

DOLLAR 101.55¢ (+0.15¢)

Natural gas: $3.40 US (-1¢)
Dow Jones: 13,245.45 (-2.99)

TSX 12,353.09 (+70.74)

OIL $86.77 US (+98¢)

GOLD $1,717.90 US (+$8.30)

Social media.

Facebook attempts to make privacy controls more user-friendly

Facebook is trying to make its privacy controls easier to find and understand in an effort to turn the world's largest social network into a more discreet place.

The fine-tuning announced Wednesday will include several revisions that will start rolling out to Facebook Inc.'s more than one billion users in the next few weeks.

The biggest change will be a new "privacy shortcuts" section that will appear as a tiny lock on the right-hand side at the top of people's news feeds. This feature offers a drop-down box where users will be able to get answers to common questions such as "Who can see my stuff?"

Other updates will include a tool that will enable individuals to review all the publicly available pictures identifying them on Facebook.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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SHIELDS UP! RED ALERT!

HE SAYS...
John Mazerolle
metronews.ca

Friends, Romulans, countrymen! Lend me your pointy ears. I come not to bury Star Trek (frankly, Voyager did that), but to praise it.

Star Trek: The Next Generation is on Netflix now, and I'm completely engaged. To my surprise and delight, many of my Facebook friends have independently made it their priority No. 1, and it's resulted in the sort of long, passionate comment threads usually only seen under shared photos of ultrasounds and/or Stephen Harper.

I've complained in this space before that too much modern pop culture is just the repackaging of ideas we've seen before. But I can't deny the movies I've been anticipating most lately: Bobcaygeon The Movie (documentary based on a rock ballad); Les Miserables (movie adaptation of a musical adaptation of a French musical adaptation of a novel); and Star Trek Into Darkness (sequel of a reboot of a movie version of a TV series).

TNG regeneration

Going back to the future is a pleasant reminder of my not-so-dazed-and-confused youth — I get older, the Enterprise crew stay the same age.

I can get all snobby at Men in Black 3, but if it's John's Crap: The Sequel, then my objections mysteriously disappear. In truth, if they made a movie of The Wire, I'd probably show up in costume (rumpled suit with vomit stains).

So, I apologize for my earlier complaints. Star Trek: Regurgitation is just fine by me.

I was the perfect age for the original run of TNG — 11 years old when it debuted as a juvenile imitation of the original series, and 17 when it was over, by then a Hugo Award-winning masterpiece beloved by virgins worldwide. So going back to the future is a pleasant reminder of my not-so-dazed-and-confused youth — I get older, the Enterprise crew stay the same age.

In a world where people no longer meet in town halls and churches, some of us get our sense of community by discussing the legends of Vulcans or Orcs or hard-drinking ad execs. Whether that's a step forward or back I'll leave to you.

But what fun to get lost in the minutia of a 24th century where anything can happen except good roles for women. How wonderful to laugh at the stuff they got wrong (Picard's personal computer is amusingly thick) and got right (Picard and Riker discuss a European union). How satisfying to gauge a fellow Trekker's knowledge level by their recognition of "Make it so" (beginner), "THERE. ARE. FOUR. LIGHTS!" (intermediate), and "All Husnock — everywhere" (expert).

My excitement led me to decide that I'm going to watch every worthwhile Star Trek episode, which after several hours perusing reviews and ratings online I've determined is 30 episodes of the original, six episodes of the animated series, 54 episodes of TNG, 69 of DS9, 29 of Voyager and 25 of Enterprise. (I just hope the experience doesn't turn me into a nerd.)

It's good to boldly go where I've already been before.

Taking us out of here, again: The cast of Star Trek: The Next Generation.
2012 CBS STUDIOS INC HANDOUT/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Love is sweeter by the dozen

KIN CHEUNG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

12/12/12 SWAK

Last triple-date to wed your mate

A couple kiss during a mass wedding ceremony at the Peak in Hong Kong, on Wednesday. At least 700 couples were expected to get married on the date 12/12/12, the last such triple-date in this year in Hong Kong as they believe the date will bring them everlasting love. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

When the clock strikes 12:12

Twelve-word vows say it all

KEITH SRAKOCIC/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Federal Judge Donetta Ambrose, left, signals that there are five more minutes before she starts the wedding between Deputy U.S. Marshal Brian Allen, centre, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Amy Johnson in federal court in Pittsburgh on Wednesday. Ambrose started their wedding at 12:12 p.m. at the couple's request, where they exchanged 12-word vows on 12/12/12. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Chinese numerology

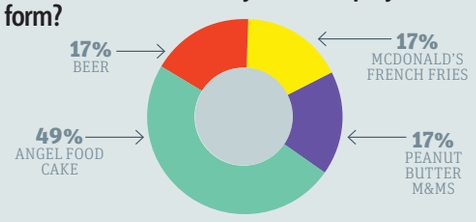
"One is considered a yang number, while two is considered a yin number. Combining the two can offer new couples balance."

Marketing firm Back Bar USA in a press release announcing its $1,212,120 Las Vegas wedding package that included the use of a private jet, watches and earrings for the wedding party, and dinner at a Michelin-rated restaurant.

Metropolitan Panel

Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

Pizza Hut is making a pizza-scented perfume. What other foods would you like in spray-on form?



Twitter

@nevesmommy: Being self-employed sometimes means bfing and feeding the toddler oatmeal while texting dh & emailing biggest contract. #sendcoffee

@devinpowell: Naillled it! #exam #westernu #law

@postdegreeuwo: This should be pretty easy to remember, Ask the Experts 12-12-12 at 12 on 1290! #westernu #cjbk #LdnOnt

@wendysland: So great to see @edjackman of @YOU_London on @DaytimeLondon this morning! Great job #madelocal #buylocal #LdnOnt

@rorykilkenny: Interesting. Checking out FB and the remaining #ldnont councillors I had "friended" have deactivated their accts. #NotYouItsMe

metro

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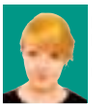
SCENE 2

Country Christmas a honky-tonkin', boot stompin' affair

And ruckus causin' too.
Rizdales' holiday tradition on for ninth year



BACKSTAGE PASS
Amanda Grant
london@metronews.ca

Londoners pack into the Richmond Tavern to hear The Rizdales every holiday season. The annual country Christmas show is a boot-stomping, line-dancing, ruckus-causing affair, with performances by the local band and touring acts they've met on the road.

This year, The Rizdales' ninth annual Christmas show, will be no different. "When we first started the band, we thought it would be fun to put on a show and have a bit of a party and say thank you," said Tom Dunphy, the band's front man. "Now, it's really grown into a community event."

The Rizdales Country Christmas show has become a staple in the holiday music scene. The band performs twice, once in Toronto and once here in London. They make snacks, give away gifts and host country-music trivia between sets.

They are also known to invite fellow local musicians on stage, jamming out an old standard or collaborating on an original tune. "There is a lot of camaraderie in the London scene," said Dunphy.

When asked why the event is hosted at the old London tavern, Dunphy's answer is simple: It's authentic. The bar has the history and evokes the traditions of the genre.

"We love the Richmond Tavern; it's our favourite room in London to play," Dunphy said. "It suits the kind of music we're doing. It feels really great to be there for the matinee shows."

This year, The Rizdales will be joined by Toronto's Samantha Martin and the Haggard and Graham Nicholas.

Martin has become a fixture of the country community in Toronto over the past couple of years, performing with members of The Beauties and Blue Rodeo. Nicholas is a former Londoner, and a veteran of the local music scene. He is known for his on-stage antics, including old-timey monologues and wild mid-song dance parties.

The bottom line? If you like country music, Sunday afternoon from 4 to 7 p.m., you need to be at the Richmond Tavern.

The event is pay what you can. Be sure to wear your dancing shoes (or cowboy boots) to the venue at 372 Richmond St.

Local country outfit The Rizdales will get you dancing at the ninth annual country Christmas show Sunday. JACK MARTIN

Around town

- **Comedy.** CBC storyteller Stuart McLean is in London this weekend with the Vinyl Café Christmas. Listen to stories about Dave and Morley, maybe even the one about the holiday turkey, and see performances by Canadian musicians touring with the show at Centennial Hall. Tickets range from $32.25 to $52.75. They're available through the Centennial Hall box office. There are evening and matinee performances.
- **Music.** Local band After Funk plays Thursday at Call the Office. Tickets are $10 at the door. Music starts at 9 p.m.

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I dream a dream ... of an Oscar

Les Misérables. How exactly does a costume designer go about dressing three A-list actors in three roles of a lifetime?

RICHARD PECKETT
richard.peckett@metro.lu

"We used a vibrant red dress, which was particularly striking styled with (Anne Hathaway's) short cropped hair," Delgado says.

"He wears a uniform pretty much for the entire film," Delgado says of Russell Crowe.

Anne Hathaway

Les Misérables hasn't hit theatres yet, but there's already talk of Academy Awards.

"The whole thing is a very big tour de force for an Oscar," says its costume designer Paco Delgado, who has worked on critical hits such as Bad Education and The Skin I Live In.

Delgado thinks that the early rave reviews come down to the fact that it's the first film version of a musical to feature live recording as opposed to lip synched performances of pre-recorded songs.

But the movie's starry team might also have something to do with it. The Oscar winner Tom Hooper, best known for The King's Speech, directed Hugh Jackman, Russell Crowe and Anne Hathaway in what critics are calling roles of a lifetime.

"When Anne Hathaway sang I Dreamed a Dream, I was moved to tears," Delgado said.

Delgado talked Metro through how he underscored the movie's three most emotive performances with costume.

The inspiration

"Costumes always have a theatrical kind of feeling, whereas clothes are very real, and what I tried to do with this movie is to get into the skin of the character whom I'm dressing," Delgado explains.

Anne Hathaway: Distressed clothes

You'd have to be living under a rock to have missed all the entertainment headlines about Anne Hathaway's 25 pound weight loss for her role as the tragic emaciated Fantine. It turns out the clothes went through the ringer as well.

"We would sand down the fabrics and bleach the materials," he explains. "And we even used blow torches to make the clothes look as though they'd been through a lot of stress," says Delgado.

"Fantine starts outs as a pretty girl in cotton mousseline dresses, which are old but still pretty, and gradually we introduce coarser materials to show her descent into prostitution," says the designer.

Hugh Jackman: Bringing the lowly to life

Hugh Jackman's Jean Valjean is a former convict and an outcast. So Delgado used "blood red rags, rough linens and materials like hessian and hemp to reflect his social position and discomfort."

"After he breaks parole, Valjean becomes more sophisticated in his dress, particularly during his ascension to village mayor," Delgado explains. "There's less grey and we use fine wools."

Russell Crowe: Dressing a black soul

"He wears a uniform pretty much for the entire film. So he's not the most interesting character (to dress) in that respect," Delgado says. "Russell really wanted to show a man who was becoming bitter with age, so we decided to gradually darken his uniform until it was almost as black as his soul."

Les Mis in numbers

2,200
costumes in total

1,500
historic outfits made from scratch

$1.1 M
spent on wardrobe overall

Newcomers to the Tolkien universe discuss their place among new class

The Hobbit. Martin Freeman and Richard Armitage talk about how Peter Jackson's crew was very welcoming to new cast

HEIDI PATALANO
Metro World News

British actor Richard Armitage plays Dwarves' leader Thorin Oakenshield in the film The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey. CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

In director Peter Jackson's eyes, Martin Freeman was always Bilbo Baggins. While Ian Holm does reprise his role as the older, wiser Bilbo in The Hobbit, there was something about the veteran of The Office and the BBC's Sherlock series that made Freeman an irresistible choice for this younger, more anxious version of Tolkien's most famous character.

"Martin is the only person that we ever wanted for that role and that was really before we met Martin," says Jackson. "We just felt he had qualities that would be perfect for Bilbo — that essential kind of fussy English, slightly repressed quality. We thought he'd be very good at playing that. He's a dramatic actor. He's not a comedian. But he's a dramatic actor who has a very rare comedic skill."

While not originally a fan of the books himself, Freeman was eager to join an already bonded cast and crew.

"My experience of Middle-earth was through the films which I think are still great pieces of work," Freeman says. "From my point of view of turning up and being involved with it, it was a pleasure to be with Pete. It was a pleasure to be with a crew that committed, to get to know actors I knew a little bit from home, but not very well who subsequently became friends … It was great. It had a way of not being intimidating."

Also joining the cast was British actor Richard Armitage, who takes on the character of Thorin, a would-be dwarf king out to avenge the deaths of his father and grandfather. Despite the fact that so many of the cast and crew from The Lord of the Rings series had returned for these three films, Armitage felt the loving embrace of a committed group of artists.

"In terms of coming into an existing franchise, we were just always made to feel very welcome, like we were coming into a family," he says.

"So many people returned that were working on the Rings trilogy. It was just very easy."

Easy in one sense, but quite daunting in another. With the cast committed to a year and a half of shooting, the actual filming process was no casual stroll through Rivendell.

"Working with Peter, the thing that I've realized is that just when you think you've given him everything you've got, he asks you for more and somehow you find it," says Armitage.

"My own limitations of myself, I've had to let those drop because there's always more to give."

Quoted

"In terms of coming into an existing franchise, we were just always made to feel very welcome, like we were coming into a family."

Richard Armitage
Talking about stepping into the Lord of the Rings production group.

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METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word

The year in celebrity divorces

THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

Yesterday we looked at the big celebrity engagements of 2012. (Aw, love!) So today we'll gaze at the years big celebrity divorces. (Boo, dead love!)

Katy Perry and Russell Brand
Announcement: Dec. 30 (so technically this occurred in 2011 but the fallout was in 2012. Work with me here, folks).
Length of marriage: 14 months
Reason: "She's young, successful and dedicated," Brand said of Perry and her career in an interview with Howard Stern in July. "(The reality is) you can't fully understand it until you do it. I was really into the idea of marriage and having children." Translation: The recovering alcoholic wanted to settle down; she wanted to party.
Contention level: Low. Instead of anger, Perry just seems embarrassed she was ever associated with the comedian. She recently hid under a table to avoid seeing him while she was having lunch with new beau John Mayer.

Heidi Klum and Seal
Announcement: Jan. 23
Length of marriage: 7 years
Reason: Klum was apparently disturbed about Seal's "inability to control his temper."
Contention level: High. The two are currently involved in a very bitter custody dispute over their four children and Klum's estimated $70 million fortune.

Katie Holmes and Tom Cruise
Announcement: June 29
Length of marriage: 5 years
Reason: Cruise was reportedly blindsided by Holmes' highly orchestrated divorce proceedings. One reason for the split? Us Weekly claims that the couple "fought viciously" over Scientology parenting.
Contention level: Medium. The divorce was fast and furious (by comparison, Kim Kardashian and Kris Humphries are still in negotiations). Cruise seems sad; Holmes ecstatic. And Suri is still well-dressed.

Amy Poehler and Will Arnett
Announcement: Sept. 6
Length of marriage: 9 years
Reason: Their romance "fizzled out," RadarOnline.com reported.
Contention level: Low. They are too adorable to be mad at one another.

Lindsay Lohan. ALL PHOTOS GETTY

Lohan won't follow Max and The Wanted

Lindsay Lohan has put an end to her gallivanting with on-the-road British boy band The Wanted, cancelling plans to follow the group to London and then Dubai, according to E! News.

Some suspected the change of plans was caused by Lohan's legal troubles, but the starlet is allowed to leave the country while on probation. Perhaps it's because her recent infatuation with Wanted member Max George reportedly isn't all that serious. "All they're doing is hanging out," a source says.

Twitter

@KChenoweth
No one will see Paranormal Activity 4 with me.

@RealMichelleT
What would the Dowager Countess do?

@msleamichele
Another great day of work at #glee! Time to get some rest now! Another big day tomorrow! Xoxo

@rustyrockets
"@JonahHill: Ok so I've decided I'm going to get married soon, I'm just not sure to who yet" I'm free.

Florence Welch

Florence the peacemaker at recent concert

Florence + the Machine singer Florence Welch turned peacemaker at a recent concert in Scotland, halting the show when she spotted two fans quarreling in the front row, according to Us Weekly. "I can't have a fight in front of me while I'm singing this song! No fighting allowed," she said. "I don't know what's happening but I'd like it to stop. It doesn't matter whose fault it is." Others in the crowd weren't pleased with the interruption and had begun chuckling nervously, causing Welch to chide them as well: "Excuse me, all of you. Stop it," she said. "I'm sorry all of you if you're upset." Welch then hopped off stage and hugged one of the fighting girls who appeared to be crying.

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Bask in Rita's aura

Jay-Z's protege spills about her two-tone lip, her knack for nurturing her locks and her long-standing love for Lopez

ROMINA McGUINNESS
life@metronews.ca

No one rocks a strong brow and bold lip quite like Rita Ora does. And so we felt compelled to pick her brain about her trademark look. In the process, Jay-Z's protege gave us a few tips on how to rock a two-tone red pout and the celebrity (it's J.Lo!) whose complexion she covets the most.

On her morning routine...
"In the day, it takes about 10 to 15 minutes (to put my makeup on). If I don't have to wear makeup, I don't. I don't mind being caught on camera bare-faced. And I think having healthy, glowing skin is really important. On off days, I'll wear bronzer and a lipstick, but that's it. A red lip and black liquid eyeliner would be my easiest look. It looks good on blondes — but this is all bleached! "

...and fancy, get-dressed-up, evening ritual
"If I have an event, I might stick some lashes on and maybe put on some golden, bronzy eye shadow, something to make my eyes stand out a bit more. But in the evening, it takes me probably about 25 minutes to do my makeup — if I'm doing it properly. Do you know what I'm doing right now? The other day, I wore a dress that had pink and red, so I made my top lip pink and my bottom lip red. That was quite cool. We invented that with my makeup artist. Or you can do bright red on the outside and dark red on the inside and blend it all together. The main thing is making your skin look flawless, like you have no makeup on."

She's not a natural blonde, but a natural beauty? No question. HANDOUT

Face the facts

"J.LO is my skin idol, I love her. Is that really crazy? Do I sound like a psychopath?"
Rita Ora

Her skin care before bed
"I wash my face every night and use Crème de la Mer moisturizing soft cream as it makes my skin feel nice. But my skin isn't too bad actually."

The hair: to spray or not to spray
"(My hair) takes a lot of work. I used to have really long hair, but when I started dying it and using curling irons and stuff, it dried it out. I'd literally have a hair spray in my bag, which isn't good. Now I use clip-ins so that I don't damage my own hair. I also do a lot of treatments — a lot of oils and masks. But your hair will only absorb so much oil. You also have to eat good. So I eat things like fish for the oils."

Lipstick or lip gloss?
"I love a strong lip. I would see women like Marilyn Monroe and Gwen Stefani with red lips and they never looked like they gave a s—t about what anyone had to say about them. They had such confidence. They were just hot and sexy and not afraid to be different. When I put red lipstick on, I want to be like them."

About that tan
(I feel the most beautiful) when I've got a tan!

Her beauty icons
"Kim Kardashian has good makeup. But J.LO is my skin idol, I love her. Is that really crazy? Do I sound like a psychopath? My mum's really good with makeup. She always has a different look. She used to say, 'Don't do a lip and an eye. Pick one.' I follow her advice ... sometimes."

A peek inside Rita's makeup bag

Tom Ford
Cherry Lush Lip Color
"It's not just an evening look, I wear it in the day with sunglasses. It spices up your face. You can have no other makeup on and just a red lipstick and look like you've made the biggest effort."
$48, tomford.com

Dior
Diorshow Waterproof Backstage Mascara
"It's really dark and makes my eyelashes strong."
$25, dior.com

Elizabeth Arden
Eight Hour Cream Skin Protectant
"I use this for everything — for my face, on my lips as a gloss. And, sometimes, when I want a wet look, I put it on my eyelids."
$20, elizabetharden.com

Bobbi Brown
Shimmer Brick Compact in Bronze
"I love the different layers. It goes from light to dark, so you can use it as an eye shadow, blusher, highlighter and bronzer. It's like four in one."
$44, bobbibrowncosmetics.com

MAC
Black Waterproof Liquid Eyeliner
"This stays on all day, it doesn't come off."
$19, maccosmsetics.com

Chanel
Vitalumière Aqua fresh and Hydrating Cream Compact Makeup SPF 15
"This covers things up quickly. It's got a little mirror which makes it easy to use." $58, chanel.com

Baby shrimp and crab meat make a delicious duo in delicate fried cakes

ROSE REISMAN
for more, visit
rosereisman.com

I love the traditional fried crab cakes served in restaurants, but are they ever high in calories and fat! Here I've used a combination of baby shrimp and crabmeat and sautéed them in a very small amount of oil. The low-fat mayonnaise sauce goes beautifully with these delicate cakes.

They end up at 99 calories and 5.8 grams of fat per serving.

Ingredients

Cakes
- 6 oz chopped crabmeat (or surimi)
- 4 oz baby shrimp (cooked)
- 3 tbsp light mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1/4 cup chopped green onion
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 1/2 cup dried unseasoned bread crumbs
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp crushed fresh garlic
- 1/2 tsp crushed fresh ginger
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp vegetable oil

Sauce
- 1 tbsp light mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp low-fat sour cream
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 1 tsp low-sodium soy sauce

Garnish
- 1/4 cup finely diced red bell pepper

1. To make the cakes, combine the crabmeat, shrimp, mayonnaise, lemon juice, green onion, cilantro, bread crumbs, egg, garlic, ginger and mustard in a food processor. Finely chop until the mixture just comes together. Don't purée. Alternatively, chop by hand.

2. Form into 6 cakes.

3. Spray a non-stick skillet with cooking oil. Add the vegetable oil and place over medium heat. Sauté the cakes for about 5 minutes per side, or just until browned and hot.

Asian Crab and Shrimp Cakes

This recipe serves six. BRIAN MACDONALD, FROM ROSE REISMAN'S COMPLETE LIGHT KITCHEN (WHITECAP BOOKS)

4. To make the sauce, combine the mayonnaise, sour cream, sesame oil and soy sauce in a serving bowl. Whisk until smooth.

5. Garnish the cakes with the diced red pepper and serve the sauce alongside. ROSE REISMAN'S COMPLETE LIGHT KITCHEN (WHITECAP BOOKS) BY ROSE REISMAN

Cookbook of the Week

Seafood made easy

Love seafood but don't have the time to get creative with cooking it? Enter 200 Best Canned Fish & Seafood Recipes by Susan Sampson.

The book is full of traditional and updated recipes, new creations and canned twists on classic fish dishes. The recipes feature canned seafood that can be found in virtually any supermarket across Canada: tuna, crab, salmon, mackerel, cod, sardines, clams, oysters, mussels and more.

Master dishes such as Salad Nicoise, Fish Tacos, Lemon Pepper-Shrimp Pasta, Lobster Mushroom Bisque, Crab Cakes, Tuna and Spinach Risotto and more. METRO

Taste the rainbow — trout with relish that is

The Arthritis Society has developed this healthy recipe for year-round entertaining. This elegant entrée is effortless to prepare and makes a leaner option than regular roasts. Plus, trout is a great source of omega 3s. Serve with wilted baby greens and potatoes.

1. Trout: Preheat the oven to 425 F (220 C). Arrange trout on a lightly greased, foil-lined baking sheet. Sprinkle evenly with salt and pepper. Blend oil with mustard, vinegar and thyme; brush evenly over the trout. Roast for 8 to 10 minutes or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork.

2. Relish: Meanwhile, heat oil in a large, non-stick skillet set over medium-high heat. Add onion, mushrooms, thyme, salt and pepper. Cook, stirring often, for 5 to 7 minutes or until browned. Stir in roasted red pepper, vinegar and garlic. Cook, stirring, for 1 to 2 minutes or until glossy.

3. Spoon mushroom relish over trout. Garnish with parsley (if using) and serve with lemon wedges.

NEWS CANADA/ ARTHRITIS.CA

Ingredients

Trout
- 2 lbs (1 kg) boneless rainbow trout, about 2 large fillets
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) each salt, pepper
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) each olive oil and Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp (10 ml) white wine vinegar
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) dried thyme

Relish
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 cups (500 ml) sliced cremini or white mushrooms
- 1/2 tsp (2 ml) dried thyme
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) each salt, pepper
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) chopped roasted red pepper
- 1 tsp (5 ml) white wine vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- Chopped parsley (optional)
- Lemon wedges

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Anitra Mecadon, host of DIY Network's Mega Dens. HANDOUT

Creating guest bedrooms where there aren't any

DIY ideas. Make guests feel welcome at your home this holiday season and into the new year

With the holidays around the corner, preparing for overnight guests is inevitable.

Rather than looking at your lack of guest suites as a challenge, consider these ideas for incorporating guest beds into functional living spaces.

Hideaway beds
Fold up the hideaway bed stereotype in your head — newer versions of this classic space saver are both more comfortable and easier to use.

Including one of these in a contemporary cabinet provides an attractive solution for overnight guests without taking up any additional space.

Wall dividers
Make the most of a room by using a wall divider to separate a guest bedroom from a room you are already using such as a home office or gym.

Using mirrored panels or patterned dividers make the room stylish for your use and your guests when they arrive.

Small spaces
Look at the unused nooks and crannies in your home that could be serving a more creative purpose.

For instance, building a simple platform underneath the stairs can easily provide room for a futon or air mattress without invading the space you already have.

Trundle beds
Doubling as a great solution for kids' sleepovers, a trundle bed is two beds that take the space of one. The second bed is tucked underneath and rolls out when needed.

This is a great solution for additional guests that doesn't take up any extra space in your home.

Moveable partitions
If you have no choice but to sleep guests in high traffic areas of your home, installing a partition will provide the necessary privacy.

Consider moving bookshelves or glass doors that will keep an open feeling and won't entirely divide the overall room.

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Masonville Place
Milton Mall
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Oakville Place
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Sheridan Centre
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Vaughan Mills
White Oaks Mall
Woodbine Centre
Yorkdale Mall

Cut deep: Roster trim looms at junior camp

World juniors. Top teenagers running out of time to make impressions with final selections expected Thursday evening

Canadian goalies Laurent Brossoit and Jake Paterson, a London Knight, chat following an exhibition game against the University of Alberta Golden Bears on Wednesday in Calgary. JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

There will be tears. There will be anger. There will be disappointment.

It won't be easy, but Team Canada coach Steve Spott will whittle his junior roster to 23 players. The final cuts — players who have always been the best on their teams — are expected Thursday night.

Don Hay, coach of the Vancouver Giants and a two-time Team Canada world junior coach, doesn't envy Spott's position.

"You see tears. You see disappointment. You see anger. You see all the things that go with human emotions," said Hay, who coached the entry last year and in 1995. "You obviously feel for that young man, going through all those different feelings and then (having to) face the media. He's got to compose himself fairly quickly before he goes out and speaks.

"It's a tough 10 or 15 minutes for everybody involved."

For those who remain, there's a team photo Friday, then a flight Saturday to Finland for exhibition games prior to the puck dropping on Boxing Day for the world junior hockey championship in Russia.

Those who don't make the roster will be whisked off to the airport for flights back to their respective teams. Few of the hopefuls have ever been cut by any team before.

Defenceman Mathew Dumba missed out last year.

"It sucked," he said. "It's a terrible experience. I got cut and I didn't fulfil my dream."

Spott is putting his own mark on how things are done. For one thing, the cuts are coming in the evening, not the morning. For years, the deed was done via 6 a.m. phone calls.

"It's not the most enjoyable thing in the world," said defenceman Jesse Blacker, now with the AHL's Toronto Marlies, who was cut from the 2011 team. "You can't really sleep. They called me at 6 o'clock to let me know that I had been cut, that I wasn't making the team. It's disappointing."

Blacker doesn't think the timing will leave players any less nervous, though.

"They're still going to be nervous in camp throughout the day," said Blacker. "The main goal is to play throughout the day without the nerves. Go out and show them what you've got, do what you can do. Don't leave yourself doubting that you gave it all you could."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Quoted

"I got away from my game last time. I was trying to prove to everyone how my defensive game had evolved.... I got away from my offensive side, which is why I got invited."

Kitchener Rangers defenceman Ryan Murphy, who has twice been cut at world junior camp.

First round of cuts

The Canadian junior men's hockey team released five players from its selection camp Wednesday.

- Defencemen Adam Pelech and Derrick Pouliot and forwards Francis Beauvillier, Sean Monahan and Tyler Graovac were cut, dropping the number of players competing for 23 spots on the team to 32.
- Four goalies, 10 defencemen and 18 forwards remain. Nine more hopefuls are expected to be released Thursday.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Three famous omissions

Sidney Crosby

The Penguins superstar is arguably one of the best hockey players in the world. Few will forget his gold-medal goal for Canada at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. But Sid the Kid was left off the 2006 roster as the Wayne Gretzky-run squad decided to go with a veteran team.

Michael Jordan

Long before Air Jordan was great, he was cut from his high school team in the 1978-79 season. As a five-foot-11 sophomore, he was considered too short. He made the junior team and never looked back, starring at North Carolina before lifting the Chicago Bulls to six NBA titles as a pro.

Kurt Warner

Few gave this former grocery-store stockboy much of a chance in the pros. But despite being undrafted and spending four years trying to make the NFL, Warner went on to become one of the league's most prolific passers, winning an MVP and Super Bowl crown in 2001 with the St. Louis Rams. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Latest lockout meeting sees no progress

The latest round of NHL labour talks ended with the two sides not even getting into the same room with each other.

The players' association and league negotiators met separately Wednesday with federal mediators in suburban New Jersey, holding discussions that didn't immediately appear to have moved the sides any closer to a deal to save the hockey season.

There was hope going into Wednesday that negotiations could get back on track to the point they were last Thursday before talks fell apart.

When the NHL agreed last week to increase its make-whole offer of deferred payments from $211 million US to $300 million, it was part of a proposed package that required the union to agree on three non-negotiable points. Instead, the players' association accepted the raise in funds, but then made counter-proposals on the issues the league stated had no wiggle room.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman then said that the offer was being pulled from the table. However, mediators informed the union on Wednesday that the proposal was still available, but it carried a take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

"I thought the gap would be closed much quicker, but it hasn't come to fruition yet, so we have to keep working."

Brendan Morrison, one of 13 players to attend the latest talks on Wednesday.

Commissioner Gary Bettman heads uptown to address the media following the NHL board of governors meeting last week in New York. BRUCE BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES

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Toronto Marlies defenceman Jake Gardiner with the Leafs last season.
TARA WALTON/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

Leafs organization being cautious with blue-liner Gardiner

Head blow. Marlies coach refuses to call standout player's injury a concussion

Jake Gardiner has been a quick learner ever since he stepped immediately into a full-time role on the Leafs blue-line, and he's continued what appears to be an all-star-calibre campaign with the Toronto Marlies during the lockout.

Gardiner, though, is now learning about the virtues of patience when dealing with a head injury.

The 22-year-old absorbed a heavy blow to his head Saturday in a game against Rochester, heavy enough to force the Marlies to exercise every caution before letting him back on the ice.

"The hit came from the other side, he (Gardiner) had gone in at the side of the net to retrieve a puck and the other player came in from behind the net. He (Gardiner) got flung and there was contact with the face area. We'll keep on top of it and whether it's a neck or a concussion, we won't have him back out there until he is ready to go," Marlies coach Dallas Eakins said.

Toronto is practising all week in preparation for games this weekend, but Gardiner has yet to return to the ice since the second-period hit Saturday.

Gardiner is showing concussion symptoms, but Eakins says the injury is not being called a concussion.

"He's good, but it's funny with these (hits to the head), they're all different and every player is different. Some guys get knocked out cold and lay on the ice but get up and are fine, and some get a brush and are out for a long time," Eakins said.

"He (Gardiner) got hit from behind, he didn't see it coming. He got a big whiplash, but he finished the play and the period, and he scored a goal. Between periods he said it was stiff (neck), and he didn't feel right. Headaches and things like that are symptoms of concussions and we're not saying he has a concussion.

"He's improved every day and every day he is better … but he's still having a pain in his neck and the headache is still there a bit. Just that feeling, he doesn't quite feel himself. So we held him out and we will continue to do so until he is 100 per cent right."

By the numbers

17

Jake Gardiner has nine goals and eight assists for 17 points through 22 games this season with the Marlies.

Top players

Former NHLers honoured with Order of Hockey

Paul Henderson, Dave King and Mark Messier were named to the Order of Hockey in Canada on Wednesday.

The 2013 class will be honoured by Hockey Canada in April at a ceremony in Ottawa during the 2013 IIHF women's world hockey championship.

They will join the inaugural class inducted last spring that included Wayne Gretzky, Gordie Howe, Jean Beliveau, Cassie Campbell-Pascall and Gordon Renwick. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Mark Messier scored 1,887 points in 1,756 games over 25 seasons.
THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

Marshawn Lynch GETTY IMAGES FILE

NFL. Seahawks RB Lynch to face former teammates in Toronto

Marshawn Lynch won't have to prepare for a frosty reception Sunday in his Buffalo Bills homecoming.

The veteran running back will face Buffalo for the first time since being dealt to the Seattle Seahawks in 2010. But the Bills' 2007 first-round pick will do so in the relative comfort of Toronto's Rogers Centre and not the cold, rainy conditions that are forecast for Western New York.

"We won't miss that day at (Ralph Wilson Stadium)," Seattle head coach Pete Carroll said with a chuckle during a conference call Wednesday. "We'll be just fine."

Buffalo dealt Lynch to Seattle in October 2010 following two off-field incidents. But Lynch is apt to receive more cheers than jeers when introduced at Rogers Centre on Sunday.

Since 2008, Bills players have complained while Buffalo is the home team at Rogers Centre, the atmosphere in the domed facility doesn't come close to replicating the loud, ear-splitting support the team gets at Ralph Wilson Stadium. Toronto fans have often been as boisterous in their support of the visiting teams as they have for the Bills and playing indoors has removed two big challenges of playing in Orchard Park, N.Y., at this time of year — cold weather and swirling winds.

"The atmosphere is different and I think everybody knows that," Bills quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick said. "It's much different than the Ralph in terms of the noise and intensity and all that.

"But we're going to have more fans there than they will and we have to be able to take advantage of that."
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Horoscopes

Aries
March 21 - April 20
Focus on what you are good at and forget the rest. If you play to your strengths, you will soon be on the road to fame and fortune. Stop listening to what everyone else is saying and do only what motivates you.

Taurus
April 21 - May 21
Chances are you will have a flash of insight today that reveals how you can earn big money in the not too distant future. Don't forget though that the future depends a lot on what you do right now, so get busy.

Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Today's new moon is sure to bring changes in one or more important relationships. Whether they are the kind of changes you enjoy remains to be seen but they are certainly changes that are needed, so don't fight them.

Cancer
June 22 - July 23
The more you do now, while you are in the mood to work, the less you will have to do later when you are not. Just remember that you don't have to do something simply because everyone else is doing it.

Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
A new moon in the most creative area of your chart gives you the kind of confidence you need to move mountains. Both in your personal life and at work you are capable of great things, so don't sell your talents short.

Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Sometimes it is smart to let your rivals win and this could be one of those occasions. If it gives them the impression that you are losing your grip, it will make it easier for you to win the battles that count!

Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Someone you meet today could become more than just a friend, so get up and get out into the world. If a stranger catches your eye, follow it up with a smile and a chat. One thing leads to another.

Scorpio
Oct. 2 04 - Nov. 22
You need to come to a decision today about a money matter and the planets will make it easy for you. There is really only one option on the table that is worth pursuing, so commit to it and make it pay.

Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
A new moon in your birth sign means you will find it easy to get your way over the next 24 hours. Does that fill your head with all sorts of outrageous ideas? It should! There are no limits (for you).

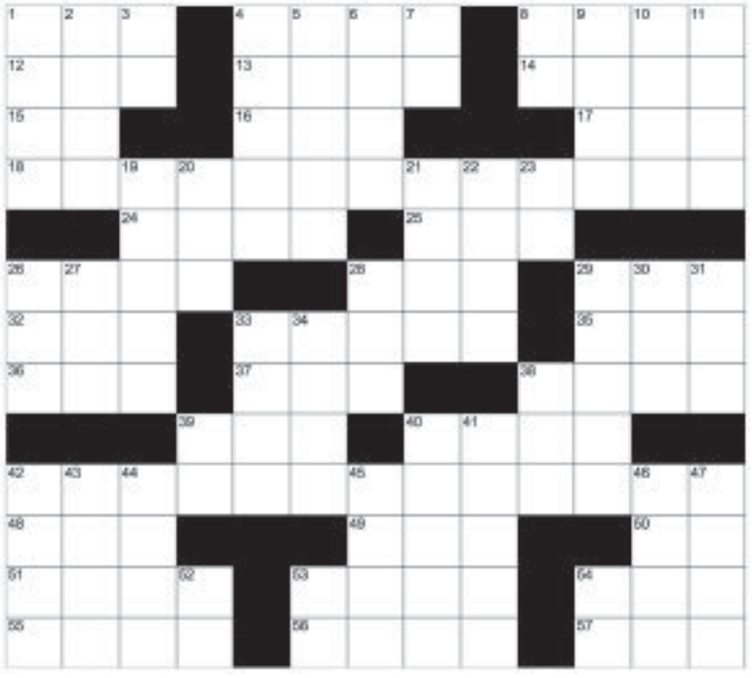
Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
How and why did you allow yourself to get worked up about something so trivial? Whatever the reason, you must now stand back from the situation and see it for what it is: a minor inconvenience, nothing more.

Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You will need to choose between one group of friends and another today. Your time is limited and you can only do justice to one set of commitments, so choose wisely. You can make it up to your other friends later.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Don't get so carried away with your plans and big ideas that you overlook the little things on which they depend. Remember: genius is 10 per cent inspiration and 90 per cent perspiration – yes, even for a Pisces. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword

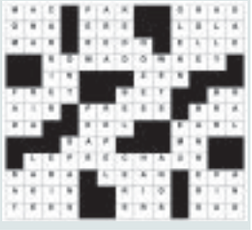
BY BETTY MARTIN



Across
1. Nightmare street
4. Ruse
8. Asian nurse
12. Cocoon
13. Comic/actress Tomlin
14. Ward of Once and Again
15. Musical group: — Vogue
16. American Music Awards (abbr.)
17. Refusals
18. 1970's Dick Van Patten series (3 words)
24. Toward sunrise
25. Sanford and —
26. Planet nearest but one to earth
28. — Paulo, Brazil
29. Coffee container
32. Aspire
33. Repeat over
35. Oath affirmation (2 words)
36. Speech hesitation
37. Runner
38. The — Griffith Show
39. Coupe or convertible
40. Send forth
42. Beatles hit song (4 words)
48. Stout
49. Boathouse item
50. Medical drama which starred George Clooney
51. Emily of New —
53. Small branch
54. Form of address
55. Hang
56. Model MacPherson
57. Capone and Capp

Down
1. Fencing sword
2. Burt Reynolds ex.
3. Marcus Welby, —
4. Some shoes
5. Margin
6. Woe is me!
7. — Wife and Kids
8. – The World Turn
9. Restaurant offering
10. Like a bump on – – (2 words)
11. Jumble
19. Bacteria
20. This Hour — 22 Minutes
21. Actor Morales of NYPD Blue
22. Lunch time for many
23. "Strangers – a Train"
26. Screen siren West
27. "— America"
28. Droop
29. Mottled bean
30. The — Couple
31. Christmas trinket
33. Type of horse
34. Wise one
38. Be indisposed
39. Hartford state.
40. High-tech message
41. Unite
42. Sleep under the stars
43. Salve plant
44. Inert gas
45. Wail
46. Bridal accessory
47. Goofs
52. Fargo state
53. — Diem
54. Peru's continent (abbr.)

Yesterday's Crossword



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See today's answers metronews.ca/answers.

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

		8	2		4	6		
	2		7		6		5	
6								8
		5	4	2	1	9		
		3	9	5	8	4		
2								6
	3		5		2		9	
		4	3		7	1		

Yesterday's Sudoku

5	4	7	8	6	1	3	2	9
6	9	1	3	4	2	5	8	7
2	3	8	9	5	7	1	4	6
4	1	2	5	7	3	9	6	8
3	5	6	4	8	9	7	1	2
8	7	9	1	2	6	4	3	5
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9	2	3	7	1	8	6	5	4
1	8	4	6	9	5	2	7	3

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McNain Communication
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